

USDA Rural Development grant, loan enable interaction in three-pronged center

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A unique concept in the rural town of Marshfield has garnered the appreciation of young and old alike, as the Tiny Tigers Intergenerational Center is both a daycare for children and an adult day care, as well. Had it not been for a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development guaranteed loan, however, the center might never have come to fruition.

Frank Frassetto, USDA Rural Development Wisconsin State Director, said he was pleased to have his organization help with the financing of such an outstanding concept.

“Seeing the interaction between the toddlers and the adult daycare attendees is really something special. As if that concept isn’t unique enough, they also incorporate an educational environment for high school students to learn about careers in human services. I’m proud to be associated with an organization that exemplifies the qualities of Wisconsin’s rural residents – through their creativity, hard



Roger Ringuette, right, a Companion Day Services member, gets excited to see one of his favorite little girls during visiting time, which run twice a day for 10-15 minutes at a time. Ringuette comes to the Tiny Tiger Intergenerational Center five times a week to interact with fellow adults and children alike.

work and sense of caring for each other.”

The organization, made up of three entities: Tiny Tiger Child Care, Marshfield Academy of Human Services Charter School and Companion Day Services; was created when Sue Babcock, Tiny Tiger Child Care Administrator, envisioned a place where children could learn from their “elders or grand-friends,” terms she uses for the adult daycare members; and where elders had the opportunity to interact with toddlers. The aspect of the center that really drove her, however, was the learning experience for high school students.

“The whole concept started as a learning lab for students – to give them an opportunity to have hands-on experience with

children,” Babcock said. It’s now evolved into something more, where the elders really look forward to their interaction time with the children and vice-versa. “Sometimes we ask the children, ‘Do you want to go visit the grand-friends?’ They stop what they’re doing to go in there,” she said. “It’s a much more open-learning environment with informal interaction, which gives the individual freedom.”

In 2007 USDA Rural Development, through Marshfield Savings Bank, provided a \$980,000 Community Facility (CF) Loan to provide financing for the center, in addition to a \$50,000 CF grant. A CF loan finances the construction, purchase, and/or renovation of various essential community facilities through direct loans, loan guarantees, and grants.

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Lori Stuebs, Tiny Tiger Child Care instructor, guides children through an exercise of finger painting with whipped cream.

in March of 2007 and has been operating at capacity for its child care ever since. Companion Day Services currently has 8-12 adults in attendance on a daily basis, but ideally can suit up to 16.

“I like the mission of the center and the ability to bring in the other generations. I think it’s good for all populations to have that interaction – it offers something special in the community,” added Krause, whose own son attends the day care.

For more information on Tiny Tiger Intergenerational Center, call 715-389-1721 or visit their Web site at www.cccmonline.com.

The project was the first one Marshfield Savings Bank had done with USDA Rural Development’s Community Facility program.

“Without the loan guarantee, we couldn’t have done it. I don’t know what would’ve happened to the center,” said David Krause, Marshfield Savings Bank Assistant Vice President. “Rural Development was on board right away and helped guide us through – they simplified the project as much as possible, providing the best guarantee for the bank with the least cash.”

“The grant paid for all the colorful stuff – made it from a drab, dreary room to a lively one,” Babcock said as she pointed out the children’s playground, bookshelves, large toys and other equipment in and around the facility.

Companion Day Services provides “quality adult day care in a homelike environment, recognizing individuality and promoting social-emotional, mental, and physical wellness,” according to its mission statement. But it provides more than that to its members.

One member rides his bicycle in any weather to come to the center for four hours every day, to make sure he doesn’t miss the time spent with the children, Babcock said. Another member, 77-year-old Roger Ringuette of Marshfield, attends the center because “They keep me alive,” he said in reference to the children. His attendance has increased from two days per week to the maximum five days due to the relationships he has established.

Tiny Tiger Intergenerational Center opened its doors

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A boy watches his teacher in the pre-toddler room. The center has various rooms for different stages of a child’s development.